

REPORT OF MEETING

PROJECT: State Project No. 102-285 – Safety and Traffic Operational Improvements on U.S. Route 1 at Strawberry Hill Avenue, Norwalk, Connecticut

LOCATION OF MEETING: Community Hall, Room 128, City of Norwalk

DATE OF MEETING: June 29, 2016, 6:30 PM

SUBJECT OF MEETING: Public Informational Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Susan Libatique	CTDOT Highway Design	860-594-3179
Yolanda Antoniak	CTDOT Highway Design	860-594-3197
Neil Patel	CTDOT Highway Design	860-594-3411
Dennis McDonald	CTDOT ROW	860-594-2475
Tim Gaffey	CDM Smith	860-593-2004
Sharat Kalluri	CDM Smith	860-808-2268
Paul Sotnik	City of Norwalk, Public Works	203-854-7791
Dan Stafko	CTDOT District 3 Construction	203-389-3162
Joe Sorcinelli	CTDOT District 3 Construction	203-389-3162
Representative Gail Lavielle	(143 rd General Assembly District)	860-842-1423

Approximately 25 attendees (including residents, stakeholders and Bicycle/ Pedestrian advocates)

Please see attached list of attendees from the public.

TRANSACTIONS AND DETERMINATIONS:

Mr. Neil Patel (CTDOT) provided a project introduction including project location, public involvement process, and outline of presentation. It was also noted that the Department held several coordination meetings prior to the Public Informational Meeting. A meeting with the City's Public Works Department was held earlier in the year and meetings with individual stakeholders were held in April and May 2016.

Mr. Kalluri (CDM Smith) presented the project details including purpose and need, crash data, existing intersection deficiencies, proposed intersection layout, proposed roadway elements, typical section, maintenance and protection of traffic, permitting, schedule, and cost of project.

Mr. McDonald (CTDOT) discussed the right-of-way process.

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION:

1. *A resident requested clarification with regards to how the DOT will acquire ROW on local (secondary) roadways.*

The Department utilizes the same ROW process for acquisition of land for highway purposes whether it involves State or Local roadways.

2. *A resident questioned how the increased traffic will be monitored on Strawberry Hill Avenue south of the intersection as a result of this project. There is a concern of higher volumes on Strawberry Hill Avenue which is a designated Safe Routes to School roadway.*

The traffic volume projections do not estimate the additional traffic as a result of the traffic improvement. Traffic projections are calculated based on applicable growth rates for each specific region of the State. It is anticipated that many of the motorists using Strawberry Hill Avenue today would continue using the same route after the project is completed and that there would not be a change in travel patterns. Additionally, the City has implemented a City-wide project to address many signals within the limits of the adjacent local roads.

3. *A member of the Norwalk Bike/Walk Task Force was concerned by the lack of bicycle improvements in this corridor. He indicated that this project should provide accommodations for bicyclists on U.S. Route 1, consistent with the Department's Complete Streets Policy. Furthermore, he stated that the City has identified U.S. Route 1 as a bike route in this area. It was requested that the Department maintain the existing narrow lane widths and reduce the center turn-lane width to accommodate a 5-foot shoulder for bicyclists. In addition, it was commented that there should be bicycle lanes on Strawberry Hill Avenue to the north.*

The Department has incorporated elements of the Complete Streets policy to the extent possible given the constraints within this corridor of U.S. Route 1, which is a heavily travelled roadway with extensive commercial/retail development. The proposed improvements include provisions for pedestrians and as required on every CTDOT project, a Bicycle and Pedestrian Needs Assessment was completed during the preliminary design process. Additional widening of the roadway for bicycle accommodation on U.S. Route 1 was not incorporated due to the narrow right-of-way corridor and proximity of parking lots for adjacent retail establishments. The standard width for the Two Way Left Turning Lane (TWLTL) is 14' and in order to provide a proper transition into a left turn lane, the left turn lane width is maintained at 14'. The TWLTL must remain at 14' to provide safe operation for turning vehicles. Also, 11' travel lanes are the minimum for this section of U.S. Route 1 as it is classified as a Principal Arterial (Intermediate). It was also noted that U.S. Route 1 does serve as the alternate route for incident management when I-95 is congested.

4. *A resident commented that Strawberry Hill Avenue is a designated bike route and requested that bicycle accommodations extend north on Strawberry Hill up to the project limits.*

The current project limits on Strawberry Hill Avenue extend about 150-200' to the north to match into the existing roadway. The purpose of the roadway work to the north is to realign Strawberry Hill Avenue. The City of Norwalk stated that there is a future plan for a designated bike lane from U.S. Route 1 northerly to the Wolfpit Road intersection. The Department will investigate the possibility of providing a wider shoulder on Strawberry Hill Ave. in the immediate vicinity of the intersection to the northerly limit of the project.

5. *A resident asked if the traffic signal will have a pedestrian phase.*

The traffic signal will have a pedestrian phase with a larger lens. The pedestrian phase will have push buttons.

6. *A resident questioned how construction will be managed if there is an incident on I-95.*

A representative from the DOT Construction office indicated that work will be evaluated according to traffic flow and coordinated with state/local police if necessary. The Department's Construction office takes traffic counts prior to construction to determine work hours for the contractor to minimize disruptions. There is potential for noise impacts during night time when work is being conducted near the intersection.

7. *A resident requested bicycle lanes on Strawberry Hill Avenue on the north side to the limit of construction as a minimum.*

See answer to question #3 and #4. The Department will coordinate with the City.

8. *A resident suggested an interim improvement at the intersection to eliminate any widening and just add left-turn only arrows to the traffic signal, crosswalks and missing sidewalks.*

Separate turn lanes are required to prevent vehicles from interlocking due to the offset alignment of Strawberry Hill Avenue. To meet ADA requirements and design standards, the Department cannot add crosswalks without incorporating ADA ramps and traffic signal appurtenances per standards.

9. *A resident asked what the projected collision reduction would be after completion of the project.*

A reduction of 50 percent is anticipated in turning and rear-end collisions.

10. *A resident asked how the public will find out the Department's decisions discussed at the meeting and how will issues be followed up.*

The contact information for the Department's representatives is on the handout and the City may post a link on their website. Written statements and public comments are requested by July 13, 2016 as noted in the handout.

11. *The property owner at 370 Westport Avenue (Bankwell property) cited possible liability issues with pedestrian movement on the sidewalk with EB vehicles entering the driveway from U.S. Route 1 and difficulty of using the drive-thru via Strawberry Hill Avenue. The property owner expressed concern that he was not aware of this project when his site was redeveloped (about 2 years ago).*

The Department stated that the design for this project had not progressed to this level at the time when the site was being redeveloped. With regards to EB vehicles accessing the drive-thru, the Department will provide provisions for signage that will direct EB vehicles to access the drive-thru via the Strawberry Hill Avenue entrance.

12. *(Prior to the presentation) A property owner indicated that drainage from the north side of Strawberry Hill Avenue flows down the easterly curblin and flows across the parking lot of the gas station property rather than remain in the roadway gutter.*

The Department stated that this issue will be investigated as part of the design process.

13. *Representative Gail Lavielle echoed concerns for bicycle-pedestrian issues raised by constituents on U.S. Route 1. She requested that the Department consider diverse use of U.S. Route 1 in the corridor when finalizing design plans moving forward, and exercise transparency with decision making subsequent to meeting. It was also recommended that the Department continue proper communication throughout the design phase for all Department projects in this region.*

The Department recognized the Representative's concerns and will follow-up on any issues raised by the public at this meeting. Any pertinent information will be documented and forwarded to the Department's contacts at the City's Public Works Department to post on their website.

14. *A resident in favor of the project stated that the proposed improvements at the intersection are needed to improve safety. She stated that a member of her family was involved in a crash at this location.*

The comment was noted.

Overall, the attendees understood the purpose and need for the proposed improvements. They were pleased with the proposed traffic improvements and the pedestrian accommodations at the intersection; however, they expressed concern about the lack of bicycle improvements on this project. The Department will further investigate bicycle accommodations for this project. It should be noted that many of the business owners who did not attend this meeting, but were present at the various stakeholder meetings were in support of the project. The meeting adjourned around 9:00 p.m.

Prepared By: Sharat Kalluri Date: 06/30/16

Reviewed By: _____ Date: 7/14/16

Approved By: _____ Date: 7/14/16